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SIPDIS

GABORONE FOR OSC LTC WYATT
HARARE FOR DAO LTC ANDERSON

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SUBJECT: MALAWI DEFENSE FORCE AT GOLFINHO EXERCISE:
ORGANIZATIONAL GLITCHES MAR AN OTHERWISE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Classified By: Peter W. Bodde, Chief of Mission, Reason(s) 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) At the recently completed SADC Standby Force GOLFINHO exercise in South Africa, problems with organization, logistics, and communications marred an otherwise positive experience for the Malawi Defense Force (MDF). The MDF's presence does signal Malawi's continued desire to participate in SADC Standby Force activities. End summary.

MDF at GOLFINHO Exercise: Positive, but ...

2. (C) BG Mecres Chinjala, MDF Director of Military Operations, told Poloff the MDF's experience as a participant in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Standby Force GOLFINHO exercise in South Africa was generally positive, but suffered from episodes of poor organization. According to Chinjala, problems arose early in the evolution. The South African hosts had committed to provide barracks space and food service, but upon arrival, the MDF found that neither were available as promised. The MDF eventually procured rations, but were forced to bivouac in the hallways of one of the exercise buildings.

3.(C) Chinjala also noted his dismay with the leadership of the exercise itself and the leading role taken by the South Africans. He complained that most of the senior brigade staff officer billets were reserved for South African National Defense Force (SANDF) members. He commented that for this type of exercise to be truly successful, "...more members from other participating countries must be included."

4.(C) Chinjala reported that the most daunting challenge that arose during the exercise was poor communication and coordination between the participating forces. To illustrate his point, he related an embarrassing instance where the Zimbabwean participants would not allow MDF colleagues to enter an area containing basic radio communication gear, even though they were programmed to be there.

Positive Outcomes

5. (C) Not all of Chinjala's comments were negative. He noted that an MDF officer led the Civilian-Military portions of the exercise, and that another served very effectively as a press relations officer. He saw the inclusion of these "civ-mil" activities, and the success of the MDF members in these roles, as a positive development. He also noted the value of including civilians in the exercise.

The MDF Contingent

6. (U) The MDF sent a total of 192 participants to GOLFINHO,

including one 130-man company, civilian police, staff officers, and observers. Most of the contingent traveled by road to the Lohatlha exercise area, covering the distance in three days in five Tata trucks, two Land Cruisers, and one 65-seat buss. Meanwhile, some senior officers traveled by air to the event. The MDF did not participate in the GOLFINHO activities that took place at Walvis Bay, Namibia.

Comment

17. (C) General Chinjala said he and senior MDF leadership were largely satisfied with the exercise, but the organizational problems did not bode well for the immediate readiness of the SADC Standby Force. Given the MDF's desire to be an active participant in peace keeping and other military activities on the continent, we expect the MDF will continue to be a participant in these types of exercises in the future.

BODDE